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Naval Service Medical News

This service is for general distribution of information and news to Navy and Marine members, civilian employees, family members and retired beneficiaries of Navy Medicine.

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Headline: 'See at Sea' Takes Eye Exams Underway
Okinawa--Almost 150 patients aboard USS Fort McHenry (LSD-43) got eye exams and never stepped on dry land, thanks to an innovative program sponsored by U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Okinawa.

LCDR Kevin M. Moore, MSC, and HM2 Jon M. Gerkins of USNH Okinawa's optometry department went aboard the ship for five days recently to reduce the large backlog of eye exams among the crew. The ship's operational schedule had prevented crew members from scheduling timely appointments.

With assistance from the hospital's medical repair department, a portable metal stand was constructed to hold the phoropter, the instrument used to assess eyeglass prescriptions. The stand made it possible to take the phoropter on the ship.

"We had a lot of fun on our 'see at sea' tour, and I'm looking forward to getting underway in August to again support our Shipmates in the fleet," said Gerkin.

Moore and Gerkins estimate that more than 800 manhours were saved by keeping Sailors and Marines on the job rather than traveling to their nearest eye clinic.

By HMCN(SW) Michael C. Carr, USN, USNH Okinawa Public Affairs

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Headline: Parris Island Commissary Opens Pharmacy

Beaufort, SC--Picking up a prescription refill is a lot quicker and easier at Parris Island these days, and you can pick up a few groceries while you're at it.

On 9 July, Naval Hospital (NH) Beaufort, SC, opened a prescription refill pickup pharmacy in the Parris Island Commissary. All prescription refills will be picked up at this new pharmacy.

LCDR Eugene Delara, MSC, NH Beaufort's head pharmacist, advised patients to call in the refill request to be picked up at the pharmacy at least 24 hours before they plan to pick up their prescription to ensure it's ready for them.

"Patients requesting refills must call the automated refill telephone line, where they are reminded to pick up their refills at the commissary," said Delara.

The new branch pharmacy will greatly enhance the service of the main pharmacy to patients with new prescriptions, limit congestion at the hospital and reduce wait time for new patients, explained LTJG Matt Garber, MSC, who is the assistant head pharmacist at the hospital.

One corpsman will operate the refill pickup pharmacy, which is open the same hours as the commissary, Garber said.

According to Delara, the refill pharmacy is the second phase of a renovation plan for the pharmacy.

By LCpl W. M. Lisbon, Marine Corps Recruiting Depot, Beaufort, SC, Public Affairs

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Headline: TRICARE Videos in Navy & Marine Corps News

Washington, DC (NSMN)--Two ten-minute video productions, one for families of active duty military members and one for retirees and their families, will be distributed throughout the Navy and Marine Corps to help inform our Navy "family" about TRICARE, the military's new health care program.

The productions will follow Navy and Marine Corps News (NMCN), program #629, which will be mailed Friday, 19 July, to 1,200 commands throughout the world. The version of NMCN distributed via AFRTS satellite link, however, will not carry the TRICARE productions. If your command does not receive NMCN, contact your base public affairs to locate a copy of this special videotape.

Copies of the TRICARE production should be made locally for widest distribution. The original NMCN videotape with the TRICARE productions should be returned for reuse.

TRICARE is being phased in across the country and in Europe. All twelve regions and Europe are expected to be operational by the end of 1997.

TRICARE represents one of the biggest changes in the way the military provides healthcare to military family members and retirees and their families in 30 years. It is being implemented to expand access to health care, assure high quality health care, control health care costs for both the beneficiary and taxpayer, and improve medical readiness.

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Headline: Medical Corps Hero Carries Olympic Flame

Washington, DC (NSMN)--ENS Michail Charissis, MC, was on his way to dinner when he became a hero.

Charisse saved the life of an injured fellow passenger by getting her to safety when the Maryland commuter train they were riding in collided with an AMTRAK train. He then went on to help other passengers who had already escaped the fiery crash.

In recognition of his heroism, Charisse was picked to carry the Olympic flame from the Capitol steps down Pennsylvania avenue toward the White House.

Only about one in ten qualified nominees were selected to be Olympic torchbearers. They were selected for heroism and community service.

"My parents are Greek--actually they came from Greece--so it's interesting for it to come full circle," said Charisse.

Charisse starts his third year at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Services this fall.

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Headline: Hospital Corps School Seeks Memorabilia

Great Lakes, IL--Naval Hospital Corps School(NHCS), Great Lakes, IL, is planning a permanent display of artifacts and memorabilia depicting the history of the Hospital Corps.

The display will provide corpsmen, Hospital Corps School students and visitors with information about the Hospital Corps, the most decorated rating in the Navy.

Individuals or commands with memorabilia to permanently display are encouraged to contact the NHCS with a description of items. Recognition will be given to individuals and commands donating items. Please do not send memorabilia at this time.

The Hospital Corps is the only enlisted corps in the armed forces. Throughout the past 98 years, members of the Hospital Corps have served at every post of danger all over the world.

For more information on the display project, contact LCDR Heisler at (847) 688-3595 and (DSN) 792-3595 or HMCM Kite at (847) 688-3410 and (DSN) 792-3410.

By HMCM (SW/AW) Jim Kite, NHCS, Great Lakes, IL

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Headline: New Medical Officer Joins From Cyberspace

The Web--The Internet holds all sorts of information for those who sign on. And for one of the Navy's newest recruits, it found him a career and help in funding his medical school education.

Alexander Bustamante, a student at the University of Wisconsin's Medical College in Madison, was surfing the Internet when he found the NavyJobs Web site. He filled out an electronic business reply "card," and a few weeks later he joined the Navy under the Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP).

He is the first Medical Corps officer to join through the Internet.

HPSP pays full tuition, fees, and a monthly stipend to students in medicine, osteopathy, dentistry or optometry for up

to four years of education.

When Bustamante graduates in 1999, he will be commissioned as a lieutenant in the Medical Corps.

From Navy Recruiting Command, Washington, DC

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Headline: Roosevelt Roads Digs In For Hurricane Bertha

Roosevelt Roads, PR--When Hurricane Bertha rolled west across the Atlantic toward Puerto Rico, most residents shuttered their homes and businesses and waited for it to pass.

Not so at U.S. Naval Hospital Roosevelt Roads.

In many ways, the hospital was busier during the hurricane than during normal operations. Almost 400 people remained on board, many of them in a standby status to treat casualties should Bertha turn vicious.

Some staff members were there to care for patients, including 14 expectant mothers. Others, such as HM3 Hoyt Decker, were there simply to keep the place running. During the two days the staff and patients "camped" at the hospital, Decker metamorphosed from corpsman to mess specialist to help prepare more than a thousand meals a day -- a challenge since commercial power was lost early the first day.

"There was work to be done (and it) knew no boundaries as far as rank was concerned. We had everyone from corpsman apprentices to Commanders washing dishes, cleaning floors and cooking with gas stoves and steamers," said Decker.

It was the building itself that needed the most care. Hundreds of sandbags were filled and stacked to seal doorways, channel water runoff, protect the centralized computer system and network servers, and secure the operating room roof, which Hurricane Hugo damaged when it tore through in 1989.

Bertha was the third hurricane in ten months to threaten Puerto Rico. Fortunately, all three changed direction at the last minute to avoid a direct strike.

By LT Perry Gehrmann, MSC, USN, NH Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico

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Headline: San Diego Hospital Donates Computers

San Diego--Naval Medical Center (NMC) San Diego donated 193 pieces of used computer equipment to the San Diego School District recently as part of the command's Partnership and Education volunteer program.

The equipment, 95 CPUs, 49 monitors, 29 keyboards, 18 printers and two battery backups, was scheduled to be sent to the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO) for disposition, when HM1 David S. Donaldson, a volunteer coordinator for NMC San Diego's educational partnerships, happened upon it.

"I found pallets of old computer equipment earmarked for disposal through DRMO and my brain went into overdrive," said Donaldson. "It took a lot of hard work researching the proper way to donate old surplus government equipment."

An executive order, signed by President Bush in 1992, encourages federal agencies to donate their old computer equipment to educational institutions, providing certain

guidelines are followed. On 17 April 1996, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12999, which also allows government agencies to donate computers to not-for-profit organizations.

"This donation will serve a double purpose," said Donaldson "The students in Madison's (James Madison High School in San Diego) computer repair program will benefit from the experience of troubleshooting and repairing the computers, and students throughout the county will gain hands on computer experience."

By Pat Kelly, NMC San Diego Public Affairs

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Headline: TRICARE Awarded to TriWest Healthcare Alliance

TRICARE North Central & Desert States--TRiWest Healthcare Alliance of Phoenix, AZ, is the new military health care provider for TRICARE Desert States (Region 7) and TRICARE North Central (Region 8).

TRICARE Desert States (Region 7) consists of Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and the southwestern corner of Texas.

TRICARE North Central (Region 8) is made up of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, and all of Idaho except for some counties in the extreme west.

Military health care services under the new contractor are expected to begin 1 February 1997.

Under the TRICARE program, military families have more health care choices than under the old CHAMPUS program. They can save money while reducing their paperwork through participation in either of two new special programs--TRICARE Prime, a health maintenance organization-like option, with an annual enrollment fee, enhanced benefits and lower "user" fees, or TRICARE Extra, with no enrollment, discounted cost-sharing and limits on the cost of inpatient care.

By the TRICARE Support Office (formerly OCHAMPUS) Public Affairs

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Headline: Sigonella Dental Volunteers Serve and Learn

Sigonella, Sicily--Four months ago, ten Red Cross volunteers in Sigonella knew very little about the inside of a dental clinic, much less the inside of a patient's mouth.

But today, they're trained assistants who help Navy dentists and technicians at the Naval Dental Clinic (NDC) in Sigonella provide more and better service to their patients.

The ten volunteers graduated from 18 hours of classroom instruction, sponsored by NDC in Sigonella, earlier this month. They are now assigned to a dental officer, who they will assist for 300 hours in a clinical setting.

"This week, we've had twenty shipboard patients a day, and the volunteers have already helped get everything ready, set up treatment areas, and have just been there for assistance," said LT Joseph Mavec, DC, a dentist who works with the volunteers.

Mavec said the volunteers are very enthusiastic about their volunteer jobs. "They love it," he said. "They get a little bit of knowledge and they run with it. They're amazing," he said.

Volunteers Carolyn Ciccarello and Rebecca King say they'll

use the skills they learned as volunteer dental assistants to help build careers. Both young women plan on continuing their study to get their dental assistance certificate or become dental hygienists.

By JO3 Sarah Felts, Naval Air Station Sigonella

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Headline: TRICARE Q & A

Q. What's the difference between TRICARE and CHAMPUS?

A. TRICARE is a new health care program that brings together the medical resources of the military, the Civilian Health and Medical Programs of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS) and civilian health care providers to expand access to care, assure high quality care, control health care costs for patients and taxpayers alike, and improve medical readiness. Active duty members, their qualified family members, non-Medicare eligible retirees and survivors of all the uniformed services are eligible.

TRICARE provides three choices in health care: Prime, Extra and Standard.

CHAMPUS is being replaced by the TRICARE program. It is the TRICARE option known as TRICARE Standard.

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Headline: Healthwatch: Save Your Life Through Exercise

If there's a single thing you can do to live longer, it's exercise, says the American Medical Association.

According to a large-scale study conducted by the Cooper Institute for Aerobic Research in Dallas, there were lower death rates among even moderately fit smokers compared to those with sedentary lifestyles.

"Being fit is good for you whether you have other risk factors or not," said Dr. Steven N. Blair, director of research at the institute.

Blair and his colleagues measured the relationship between fitness and mortality by following tens of thousands of men and women for more than eight years to compare the relationship between fitness and risk factors that predisposed people to an early death. These risk factors include smoking, unchecked high blood pressure and obesity.

Without exception, no matter what the risk factor, if individuals exercised, they were healthier and lived longer than their sedentary counterparts with similar risk factors.

"We see this association in the healthy and the unhealthy, the fat and the lean, the smokers and the non-smokers and those with and without elevated blood pressure or cholesterol levels," said Blair.

Blair also said he didn't want people to think that if they exercised, it was okay to smoke. "It's not all right to smoke, but if you do smoke you are better off if you exercise," he said.

"The public health message is that even moderate activity such as brisk walking for 30 minutes on most days of the week will bring a person to a moderate level of fitness," concluded Blair.

From the American Medical Association

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Feedback, inputs, questions, and suggestions for improving NSMN are invited. Contact Jan Davis, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs, e-mail: nmc0jkd@bms200.med.navy.mil.

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